

Supervisor Brewer supports fixing Mental Health Care

Nationwide, the State of Arizona ranks near the bottom in overall treatment and funding for the seriously mentally ill. The facilities at the Arizona State Hospital have become so run down, that each month an estimated \$2,800 in emergency capital improvements have become necessary.

Thankfully, Governor Hull and the State Legislature have begun to grapple with financing a new State Hospital and providing sufficient care and overall funding for the seriously mentally ill. They appointed a State Task Force on Improving the Arizona Mental Health System that has worked diligently over the past few months to identify real solutions.

Throughout the last year, Maricopa County has also continued to forge ahead with our own responsibility to provide for the mentally ill. Maricopa County is obligated to spend \$29 million in direct funding to specifically treat the seriously mentally ill. In addition to this, the County spends an additional \$8 million to provide treatment for mentally ill that are incarcerated in our jail and juvenile detention systems, as well as for court programs that evaluates competency to stand trial and assists with diversion programs.

Maricopa County also is proud to have entered into a public/private contract to finally reopen a Mental Crisis Center at the Maricopa County Medical Center. In the old days, Maricopa County Medical Center -- like most other county hospitals across the United States -- maintained a Mental Crisis Center as the place to bring someone with a mental crisis. For financial reasons, the County in the 1980s had to close its Mental Crisis Center thus forcing the general public to seek outside assistance. This new public/private partnership will allow for a Mental Crisis Center to be reopened and begin providing much needed additional service to our community.

The Governor and State Legislature should be applauded for finally taking on the difficult task of providing for our seriously mentally ill. At the same time, let us remember that Maricopa County continues to step up to the plate with nearly \$37 million in funding, and we have also set the standard statewide as far as introducing vital programs and providing necessary new services for the seriously mentally ill.